

City of Rockville Board of Supervisors of Elections
Report to Mayor and City Council
March 17, 2014
Election 2013

Attachment - A

The Board of Supervisors of Elections (BSE) reviews each election to identify issues to address to improve the elections process for voters and for candidates. This year, individual invitations were sent to all candidates and campaign managers to attend wrap-up meetings. The first meeting was held on January 25, 2014, and the second on February 6, 2014.

Based on information gathered at these wrap-up meetings, other input from citizens and candidates, and observations of the BSE and City staff, the BSE identified seven issues to discuss with the Mayor and Council. Some of these issues will require action by the Mayor and Council; some will not. There is more than sufficient time before the next election for the Mayor and Council to act if it so chooses. Some of the items may require Charter and/or Code changes. As the BSE moves forward with its work on the following issues, we will advise the Mayor and Council on specifics.

1. **Relocate Polling Site** - The Montgomery County Public Schools will no longer allow Ritchie Park Elementary School to be used as a polling place. There is concern for the safety of young students while school is in session on Election Day. Ritchie Park Elementary School is the only public school still used for City elections. After considerable research into alternative sites, no suitable site was found in District 7. The BSE recommends that both District 7 and 8 voters use the Thomas Farm Community Center in District 8.
2. **Develop Process for Early Voting** - Many jurisdictions across the country, including Maryland and Montgomery County, have increased voter participation by providing an Early Voting option. The BSE recommends that the City initiate Early Voting on the Saturday/Sunday before Election Day using City Hall as the polling place.
3. **Make Recommendation on Absentee Voting** - On Election Day, allow Absentee Voting only at City Hall. The BSE heard concerns about the delay in announcing the election results. Conducting Absentee Voting only at City Hall would allow the BSE to process and transport ballots to the voting center more quickly and ensure an accurate and secure election.
4. **Recommend Chapter 8 Code Changes** - Specific targets for revision include: Definition of "campaign committee," "cost," and "candidate;" anonymous literature; Hatch Act practices; Early Voting language; electronic media; and selected election processes.
5. **Develop or Modify Pre-Election and Election Processes** - The BSE will develop or modify processes or guidance for:

- Voter assistance form usage at outreach locations, particularly nursing homes
- Absentee ballot tabulation and canvass
- Candidate Information Election Packet update
- Addition of Monday night Election Judges' meetings

Based on the Mayor and Council directions, the BSE will develop procedures for:

- Provisional voting at the polling place and for same day voting at City Hall
- Elimination of absentee ballots at polling places
- Early Voting only at City Hall, all same day voting or registration at City Hall, and adding provisional voting at the polling place

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6. **Explore Ways to Increase Voter Turnout** - The BSE would like to encourage more citizens to register and to vote. The City's Human Rights Commission (HRC) conducts voter registration drives throughout Rockville at various times during the year, and the BSE participated with the HRC at Hometown Holidays. The BSE will explore the feasibility of candidate access to multi-family dwellings, use of multiple media sites, personalized approaches, and ways to educate non-voters or intermittent voters. To avoid a duplication of effort, the BSE will continue to complement the efforts of the HRC at Hometown Holidays to assist in the voter registration drives and with the Communication Department for voter outreach.
7. **Review BSE Standards and Ethics** - In the most recent elections, issues surfaced related to the use of nontraditional media and the conduct of BSE members such as attending campaign functions, endorsing a candidate as a private individual (not as a Board member), and determining the amount of time that should elapse between resigning from the Board and declaring as a candidate.

Information Item - The City will beta test the County equipment for the 2015 election. The County will assist with Election Judge training and the Election, which will reduce costs to the City.

In addition, the BSE is aware that the Mayor and Council is considering changes to the City Charter related to elections in response to the advisory referenda that were on the ballot this past election. The Mayor and Council must decide whether to move to four-year terms and/or hold City elections in Presidential Election years. The BSE, the body charged with running City elections, considered how the decisions might affect its work plans. The BSE identified factors for the Mayor and Council to consider.

Consideration needs to be given to the following if City elections coincide with Presidential Elections:

- City offices and questions will be placed at the end of the ballot and will be placed in a similar order as other offices and questions are arranged on the ballot
- Possible confusion to the voter
- Outreach to City voters
- The role of the BSE, City Clerk's Office and staff, and City control over elections

Consideration also needs to be given to the cost. It is expected that the State will charge a municipality a minimum of \$12,000 to be included on the ballot. In addition, the Mayor and Council should expect to pay a pro-rated share of State and County costs including, but not limited to:

Equipment	Election Judge training
Staff time	Supplies
Facilities	Publicity
Early Voting	Printing/Mailing/Postage

We will begin our preparation for the 2015 election and will proceed with subsequent election cycles when you determine what they will be.